

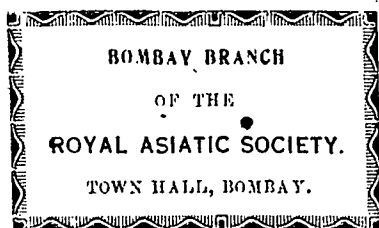
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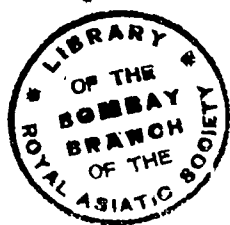
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The following Jeu d'Esprit was written by Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS to illustrate a remark which he had made, "That Dr. Johnson considered Garrick as his perty, and would never suffer any one to praise or abuse him but himself." In the first of these supposed dialogues Sir Joshua himself, by high encomiums upon Garrick, is represented as drawing down upon him Johnson's censure; in the second, Mr. Gibbon, by taking the opposite side, calls forth his praise.



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JOHNSON AGAINST GARRICK.

DR. JOHNSON AND SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

REYNOLDS. Let me alone, I'll bring him out. [*aside*.

I have been thinking, Dr. Johnson, this morning, on a matter that has puzzled me very much; it is a subject that I dare say has often passed in your thoughts, and though *I* cannot, I dare say *you* have made up your mind upon it.

JOHNSON. Tilly fally, what is all this preparation, what is all this mighty matter?

R. Why, it is a very weighty matter. The subject I have been thinking upon is, Predestination and Free-will, two things I cannot reconcile together for the life of me; in my opinion, Dr. Johnson, Free-will and Fore-knowledge cannot be reconciled.

J. Sir, it is not of very great importance what your opinion is upon such a question.

R. But I meant only, Dr. J., to know your opinion.

J. No, sir, you meant no such thing; you meant only to shew these gentlemen that you are not the man they took you to be, but that you think of high matters sometimes, and that you may have the credit of having it said that you held an argument with Sam Johnson on predestination and free will; a subject of that magnitude as to have engaged the attention of the world, to have perplexed the wisdom of man for these two thousand years; a subject on which the

fallen angels, who *had yet not lost all their original brightness*, find themselves in *wandering mazes lost*. That such a subject could be discussed in the levity of convivial conversation, is a degree of absurdity beyond what is easily conceivable.

R. It is so, as you say, to be sure; I talked once to our friend Garrick upon this subject, but I remember we could make nothing of it.

J. O noble pair!

R. Garrick was a clever fellow, Dr. J.; Garrick, take him altogether, was certainly a very great man.

J. Garrick, sir, may be a great man in your opinion, as far as I know, but he was not so in mine; little things are great to little men.

R. I have heard you say, Dr. Johnson——

J. Sir, you never heard me say that David Garrick was a great man; you may have heard me say that Garrick was a good repeater—of other men's words—words put into his mouth by other men; this makes but a faint approach towards being a great man.

R. But take Garrick upon the whole; now, in regard to conversation——

J. Well, sir, in regard to conversation, I never discovered in the conversation of David Garrick any intellectual energy, any wide grasp of thought, any extensive comprehension of mind, or that he possessed any of those powers to which *great* could, with any degree of propriety, be applied——

R. But still——

J. Hold, sir, I have not done—there are, to be sure, in the laxity of colloquial speech, various kinds of greatness; a man may be a great tobacconist, a man may be a great painter, he may be likewise a great mimick;

mimick; now you may be the one, and Garrick the other, and yet neither of you be great men.

R. But Dr. Johnson——

J. Hold, sir, I have often lamented how dangerous it is to investigate and to discriminate character, to men who have no discriminative powers.

R. But Garrick, as a companion, I heard you say—no longer ago than last Wednesday, at Mr. Thrale's table——

J. You tease me, sir. Whatever you may have heard me say, no longer ago than last Wednesday, at Mr. Thrale's table, I tell you I do not say so now; besides, as I said before, you may not have understood me, you misapprehended me; you may not have heard me.

R. I am very sure I heard you.

J. Besides, besides sir, besides,—do you not know, —are you so ignorant as not to know, that it is the highest degree of rudeness to quote a man against himself?

R. But if you differ from yourself, and give one opinion to-day——

J. Have done, sir, the company you see are tired, as well as myself.

TOTHER SIDE.

DR. JOHNSON AND MR. GIBBON.

JOHNSON. No, sir; Garrick's fame was prodigious, not only in England, but over all Europe; even in Russia I have been told he was a proverb, when any one had repeated well he was called a second Garrick.

GIBBON. I think he had full as much reputation as he deserved.

J. I do not pretend to know, sir, what your meaning may be, by saying he had as much reputation as he deserved; he deserved much, and he had much.

G. Why surely, Dr. Johnson, his merit was in small things only, he had none of those qualities that make a real great man.

J. Sir, I as little understand what your meaning may be when you speak of the qualities that make a great man; it is a vague term. Garrick was no common man; a man above the common size of men, may surely without any great impropriety, be called a great man. In my opinion he has very reasonably fulfilled the prophecy, which he once reminded me of having made to his mother, when she asked me how little David went on at school, that I should say to her, that he would come to be hanged, or come to be a great man. No, sir, it is undoubtedly true that the same qualities, united with virtue or with vice, make
a hero

a. hero or a rogue, a great general or a highwayman. Now Garrick, we are sure, was never hanged, and in regard to his being a great man, you must take the whole man together. It must be considered in how many things Garrick excelled in which every man desires to excel : setting aside his excellence as an actor, in which he is acknowledged to be unrivalled ; as a man, as a poet, as a convivial companion, you will find but few his equals, and none his superior. As a man; he was kind, friendly, benevolent, and generous.

G. Of Garrick's generosity I never heard; I understood his character to be totally the reverse, and that he was reckoned to have loved money.

J. That he loved money, nobody will dispute; who does not? but if you mean, by loving money, that he was parsimonious to a fault, sir, you have been misinformed. To Foote, and such scoundrels, who circulated those reports, to such profligate spendthrifts prudence is meanness, and economy is avarice. That Garrick, in early youth, was brought up in strict habits of economy I believe, and that they were necessary, I have heard 'from himself; to suppose that Garrick might inadvertently act from this habit, and be saving in small things, can be no wonder; but let it be remembered at the same time that if he was frugal by habit, he was liberal from principle; that when he acted from reflection he did what his fortune enabled him to do, and what was expected from such a fortune. I remember no instance of David's parsimony but once, when he stopped Mrs. Woffington from replenishing the tea-pot; it was already, he said, as red as blood; and this instance is doubtful, and happened many years ago. In the latter part of his life I observed

served no blameable parsimony in David ; his table was elegant and even splendid ; his house both in town and country, his equipage, and I think all his habits of life, were such as might be expected from a man who had acquired great riches. In regard to his generosity, which you seem to question, I shall only say ; there is no man to whom I would apply with more confidence of success, for the loan of two hundred pounds to assist a common friend, than to David, and this too with very little, if any, probability of its being repaid.

G. You were going to say something of him as a writer—you don't rate him very high as a poet.

J. Sir, a man may be a respectable poet without being a Homer, as a man may be a good player without being a Garrick. In the lighter kinds of poetry, in the appendages of the drama, he was, *if not the first, in the very first class*. He had a readiness and facility, a dexterity of mind that appeared extraordinary even to men of experience, and who are not apt to wonder from ignorance. Writing prologues, epilogues, and epigrams, he said he considered as his trade, and he was, what a man should be, always, and at all times ready at his trade. He required two hours for a prologue or epilogue, and five minutes for an epigram. Once at Burke's table the company proposed a subject, and Garrick finished his epigram within the time ; the same experiment was repeated in the garden, and with the same success.

G. Garrick had some flippancy of parts, to be sure, and was brisk and lively in company, and by the help of mimicry and story-telling made himself a pleasant companion ; but here the whole world gave the superiority

riority to Foote, and Garrick himself appears to have felt as if his genius was rebuked by the superior powers of Foote. It has been often observed that Garrick never dared to enter into competition with him, but was content to act an under part to bring Foote out.

J. That this conduct of Garrick's might be interpreted by the gross minds of Foote and his friends, as if he was afraid to encounter him, I can easily imagine. Of the natural superiority of Garrick over Foote, this conduct is an instance; he disdained entering into competition with such a fellow, and made him the buffoon of the company; or, as you say, brought him out. And what was at last brought out but coarse jests and vulgar merriment, indecency and impiety, a relation of events which, upon the face of them, could never have happened, characters grossly conceived and as coarsely represented? Foote was even no mimic; he went out of himself, it is true, but without going into another man; he was excelled by Garrick even in this, which is considered as Foote's greatest excellencé. Garrick, besides his exact imitation of the voice and gesture of his original, to a degree of refinement of which Foote had no conception, exhibited the mind and mode of thinking of the person imitated. Besides, Garrick confined his powers within the limits of decency; he had a character to preserve, Foote had none. By Foote's buffoonery and broad-faced merriment, private friendship, public decency, and every thing estimable amongst men, were trod under foot. We all know the difference of their reception in the world. No man, however high in rank or literature, but was proud to know Garrick, and was
glad

glad to have him at his table; no man ever considered or treated Garrick as a player: he may be said to have stepped out of his own rank into an higher, and by raising himself he raised the rank of his profession. At a convivial table his exhilarating powers were unrivalled; he was lively, entertaining, quick in discerning the ridicule of life, and as ready in representing it; and on graver subjects there were few topics in which he could not bear his part. It is injurious to the character of Garrick to be named in the same breath with Foote. That Foote was admitted sometimes into good company (to do the man what credit I can) I will allow, but then it was merely to play tricks, Foote's merriment was that of a buffoon, and Garrick's that of a gentleman.

G. I have been told, on the contrary, that Garrick in company had not the easy manners of a gentleman.

J. Sir, I don't know what you may have been told, or what your ideas may be, of the manners of gentlemen; Garrick had no vulgarity in his manners, it is true Garrick had not the airiness of a fop, nor did he assume an affected indifference to what was passing; he did not lounge from the table to the window, and from thence to the fire, or whilst you were addressing your discourse to him, turn from you and talk to his next neighbour, or give any indication that he was tired of his company; if such manners form your ideas of a fine gentleman, Garrick certainly had them not.

G. I mean that Garrick was more overawed by the presence of the great, and more obsequious to rank, than Foote, who considered himself as their equal,
and

and treated them with the same familiarity as they treated each other.

J. He did so, and what did the fellow get by it? The grossness of his mind prevented him from seeing that this familiarity was merely suffered as they would play with a dog; he got no ground by affecting to call peers by their surnames; the foolish fellow fancied that lowering them was raising himself to their level; this affectation of familiarity with the great, this childish ambition of momentary exaltation obtained by the neglect of those ceremonies which custom has established as the barriers between one order of society and another, only shewed his folly and meanness; he did not see that by encroaching on others dignity, he puts himself in their power either to be repelled with helpless indignity, or endured by clemency and condescension. Garrick, by paying due respect to rank, respected himself; what he gave was returned, and what was returned, he kept for ever; his advancement was on firm ground, he was recognized in public as well as respected in private, and as no man was ever more courted and better received by the public, so no man was ever less spoiled by its flattery; Garrick continued advancing to the last, till he had acquired every advantage that high birth or title could bestow, except the precedence of going into a room, but when he was there, he was treated with as much attention as the first man at the table. It is to the credit of Garrick that he never laid any claim to this distinction, it was as voluntarily allowed as if it had been his birth-right. In this, I confess, I looked on David with some degree of envy, not so much for the respect he received, as for the manner of its being acquired; what

what fell into his lap unsought, I have been forced to claim. I began the world by fighting my way. There was something about me that invited insult, or at least a disposition to neglect, and I was equally disposed to repel insult and to claim attention, and I fear continue too much in this disposition now it is no longer necessary; I receive at present as much favour as I have a right to expect. I am not one of the complainers of the neglect of merit.

G. *Your pretensions, Dr. Johnson, nobody will dispute; I cannot place Garrick on the same footing: your reputation will continue increasing after your death, when Garrick will be totally forgot; you will be for ever considered as a classic—*

J. Enough, sir, enough; the company would be better pleased to see us quarrel than bandying compliments.

G. But you must allow, Dr. Johnson, that Garrick was too much a slave to fame, or rather to the mean ambition of living with the great, terribly afraid of making himself cheap even with them; by which he debarred himself of much pleasant society. Employing so much attention, and so much management upon such little things, implies, I think, a little mind. It was observed by his friend Colman, that he never went into company but with a plot how to get out of it; he was every minute called out, and went off or returned as there was, or was not, a probability of his shining.

J. In regard to his mean ambition, as you call it, of living with the great; what was the boast of Pope, and is every man's wish, can be no reproach to Garrick; he who says he despises it, knows he lies; that Garrick
husbanded

husbanded his fame, the fame which he had justly acquired both at the theatre and at the table, is not denied ; but where is the blame either in the one or the other, of leaving as little as he could to chance ? Besides, sir, consider what you have said, you first deny Garrick's pretensions to fame, and then accuse him of too great an attention to preserve what he never possessed.

G. I don't understand——

J. Sir, I can't help that.

G. Well, but, Dr. Johnson, you will not vindicate him in his over and above attention to his fame, his inordinate desire to exhibit himself to new men, like a coquet, ever seeking after new conquests, to the total neglect of old friends and admirers;—

“ He threw off his friends like a huntsman his pack,”
always looking out for new game.

J. When you quoted the line from Goldsmith, you ought, in fairness, to have given what followed,—

“ He knew when he pleased he could whistle them back ;”
which implies at least that he possessed a power over other men's minds approaching to fascination ; but consider, sir, what is to be done : here is a man whom every other man desired to know. Garrick could not receive and cultivate all, according to each man's conception of his own value—we are all apt enough to consider ourselves as possessing a right to be excepted from the common crowd ; besides, sir, I do not see why that should be imputed to him as a crime, which we all so irresistibly feel and practise ; we all make a greater exertion in the presence of new men than old acquaintance ;

acquaintance; it is undoubtedly true that Garrick divided his attention among so many that but little was left to the share of any individual, like the extension and dissipation of water into dew, there was not quantity united sufficiently to quench any man's thirst; but this is the inevitable state of things, Garrick no more than another man could unite what, in their natures, are incompatible.

G. But Garrick not only was excluded by this means from real friendship, but accused of treating those whom he called friends, with insincerity and double dealings.

J. Sir, it is not true; his character in that respect is misunderstood: Garrick was, to be sure, very ready in promising, but he intended at that time to fulfil his promise; he intended no deceit; his politeness or his good nature, call it which you will, made him unwilling to deny, he wanted the courage to say *No* even to unreasonable demands. This was the great error of his life: by raising expectations which he did not, perhaps could not, gratify, he made many enemies; at the same time it must be remembered that this error proceeded from the same cause which produced many of his virtues. Friendships from warmth of temper too suddenly taken up, and too violent to continue, ended as they were like to do, in disappointment: enmity succeeded disappointment, his friends became his enemies, and those having been fostered in his bosom, well knew his sensibility to reproach, and they took care that he should be amply supplied with such bitter potions as they were capable of administering; their impotent efforts he ought to have despised, but he felt them; nor did he affect insensibility.

G. And

G. And that sensibility probably shortened his life.

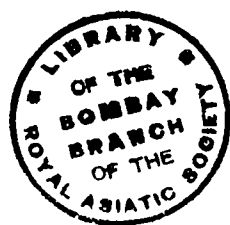
J. No, sir, he died of a disorder of which you or any other man may die, without being killed by too much sensibility.

G. But you will allow, however, that this sensibility, those fine feelings, made him the great actor he was.

J. This is all cant, fit only for kitchen wenches and chamber-maids; Garrick's trade was to represent passion, not to feel it. Ask Reynolds whether he felt the distress of count Hugolino when he drew it.

G. But surely he feels the passion at the moment he is representing it.

J. About as much as Punch feels. That Garrick himself gave into this foppery of feelings I can easily believe; but he knew at the same time that he lied. He might think it right as far as I know, to have what fools imagined he ought to have; but it is amazing that any one should be so ignorant as to think that an actor will risk his reputation by depending on the feelings that shall be excited in the presence of two hundred people, on the repetition of certain words which he has repeated two hundred times before in what actors call their study.—No, sir, Garrick left nothing to chance, every gesture, every expression of countenance, and variation of voice, was settled in his closet before he set his foot upon the stage.





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